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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 002295

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SA/INS, LONDON FOR POL/GURNEY, NSC FOR MILLARD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/21/2013

TAGS: [NP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: PRIME MINISTER PREPARES FOR REGIONAL TOUR  
AS OWN PARTY ATTEMPTS TO OUST HIM

Classified By: DCM Robert K. Boggs for Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

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Summary  
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11. (C) On November 23, Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa will depart Nepal on a ten-day visit of the four regional capitals, starting with New Delhi and finishing with Islamabad. The objective is to brief the other SAARC governments on achievements made during Nepal's one-year chairmanship and to prepare for the January summit in Islamabad. On the eve of his tour, however, Prime Minister Thapa is facing major opposition from his own party leadership. On November 20, the Rastra Prajatantra Party's (RPP) central working committee demanded that the Prime Minister resign by mid-morning the following day -- which the Prime Minister has firmly refused to do. The schism within the ruling party is further evidence that, despite Nepal's political crisis and the need for strong, unified leadership, partisan politics continues to divert attention from the challenges now confronting the country. End Summary.

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Prime Minister's Regional Tour:  
A Warm-Up for the SAARC Summit  
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12. (SBU) Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa is departing Nepal on November 23 to visit regional capitals to prepare for the Summit of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), scheduled for January in Islamabad. Thapa will spend three days in New Delhi where he expects to meet with Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee and then travel to Colombo from November 26-28, Thimpu from November 29-30 and Islamabad from December 1-2.

13. (SBU) According to Maduban Prasad Poudel, Under Secretary for South Asia at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the objective of the trip is to brief the other SAARC governments on achievements made during Nepal's one-year chairmanship. The Prime Minister will highlight progress made under the South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) and discuss the draft Social Charter. Poudel also claimed that the Prime Minister's official agenda does not include bilateral issues. However, he speculated that the Prime Minister will likely discuss bilateral issues informally with some leaders, such as the Maoist insurgency with the Indians and the refugees with the Bhutanese.

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Prime Minister's Party Demands His Resignation  
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14. (SBU) On the eve of the Prime Minister's regional tour, the central working committee of his own political party, the Rastra Prajatantra (National Democratic) Party (RPP) has demanded that Prime Minister Thapa resign his position by 1000 hours on November 21. The Prime Minister refused the ultimatum. He was appointed by the King under "special circumstances" and not

by -- and is not accountable to -- the RPP leadership, Thapa reportedly said.

15. (SBU) Spokesperson for the RPP, Roshan Karki, noted that Prime Minister Thapa was chosen by the King, in part because of his leadership in the party and, therefore, owes his appointment, at least in part, to the RPP. The RPP also criticized Thapa for not consulting the party in the appointment of local officials. However, Karki said, the RPP would withdraw its demand for his resignation if Thapa is able to garner support from the two main political parties -- Nepali Congress and CPN-UML.

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Comment  
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16. (C) The RPP leadership has been divided, with Surya Bahadur Thapa on one side and Party President Pashupati Sumshere Rana on the other. The split appears to have widened over the past four months because Thapa did not appoint any of Rana's faction to his Cabinet, leaving many positions vacant in hopes of forming an all-party government. The RPP leadership expects Thapa to fill the vacancies with RPP leaders since he has been unable to secure other political party participation. In any case, the schism is evidence that despite the political crisis in Nepal and the need for strong and unified leadership, divisive partisan politics continue unabated. We do not expect Thapa, who believes he has the confidence of the King, to comply. End Comment.  
MALINOWSKI